

# David Aylers

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I was one of four children. My father was David Aylers the first. He and my mother had two girls first but they were heading for a boy, me David Aylers the second. I think they loved me in a way, they thought big things of me. When I was a little boy it was during the recession and the people were moving a lot always building and destroying houses. They were building a lot of houses in our neighbourhood and I loved to watch the carpenters. This was in Missisipi and bad times, the 20ies, Depression. My father lost his job and I was sent to my grandfather who had a farm. My grandfather had been a slave. They gave every slave 45 acres and a mule but when he died he had 180 acres. He had been sort of an industrial slave, which was not what you see in *Gone with the wind*. The people were like cattle, they were working from sunrise till sunset and then they were locked in shacks near the fields and chained together so they wouldn't run away. They were picking up the tallest and strongest men and women and they had children. They wanted to breed them. My mother was very fair, but my grandfather was really black. He was a farmer and I worked with him. I remember the big snakes there. I was very afraid but they were even more afraid.

I started working as an ice boy. I mostly delivered 50 pounds, sometimes it was 100 but mostly 50 or 25 pounds, and I was working as a milk boy. Once a dog bit me, he advanced me, he didn't bark or nothing, he just bit me. I started to think about delivery systems there, how to get these things to the people, I saw all of the women carrying bags. There were newspaper boys, ice boys, milk boys, all sort of people carrying things.

I was doing a lot of hoboing, I went to Chicago. We were three and we said we would never part. They wanted to go back to Missisipi and I went with them. We went all three by hoboing, but I guess they were not as experienced. When we arrived in Missisipi I looked and looked, they were not there, I never saw them anymore. In Missisipi I was living with my mother but I made no progress. She had a glass box, with the money and I took money out. She was angry, we had an argument and I planned to go back to Chicago, but I never got there. I was too young and the rail police caught me. In Ukon New York it was and I had no money. I went to a grocer shop and stole shoe polish. It was a five cent shoe polish and it was black I polished shoes and if somebody came with white shoes or brown shoes I hid it behind my back. But I improved my shoe shine box and I go into the Laden to give back the money. It was Joe Holland's Laden who became my trainer for life. It was him who made me call my mother on my 15th birthday. He insisted that I should call my mother. I don't have a place to sleep then and I was working for Joe Holland delivering machines, these were pin ball machines. I slept in the back room, with all the parts of the pinball machines. He and I got along but he had two brothers and we always had arguments. Me and the strong brother we had some difficulties we got out of the Laden to fight it out. There was this place in front of the Laden and we had a big audience, we was fighting and what happened was I kicked it. He fell I thought he was dead, but he wasn't. I've never been aggressive. But the other brother who was real hip said I was. He was in the room, he felt cornered and he got frightened, hysterically frighthened, he started to throw these things at me like cracy. So somehow I heard that Joe thought I was aggressive, so I just left.

During these times I got to know Billy Fachetti, he used to repair these machines. He and I got along. He had a tenancy. "... and the amusement company", in Buffalo New York, it was across the police station. They gave me a call and I went there. I got a job by the way. I already knew about pin ball machines, this was Juke Boxes. I cleaned the machines and I started repairing the machines for 15 Dollar a week. It was when they said a nigger is worth a Dollar a day. I had an arrangement, I would go afterhours repairing machines. So step by step I had the 15\$ a week and 15\$ a night when I went to the bars to repair the

juke boxes in there. I didn't learn to much about Juke boxes but it was a good neighbourhood. That was during the war. Guys had money, they put it in pinball machines. So I had money. I was inviting everyone in the bars and I buy a Juke box of my own.

I became a Wurlitzer Music merchand. I got a licence. I had money, You know, black people are juke boxing all the time.

I leased a place to repair my customer's machines. it was Depression, so you could rent places everywhere. My mother was living with me, she had given up her house in Missisipi. One day I went home and my mother told me this guy called up for me. This guy and two guys with him. They were friendly, but it was clear, they wanted to rent the place I was interested in and I was interfering, we got into conversation and they told me what to do. They wanted me as a partner and they wanted to make alcohol. You couldn't get no sugar then and they had sugar to the walls. They built one pot, where they distilled it, it was all new to me, they filled it in cans and they took it to Cleveland. I had a Cadillac and I was always going Cleveland, Buffalo. Once the police got me, which was good in a way, because this other guy, Battista, he was in the papers with a bullet whole in one side of the head.

I wound up in jail with one guy called Peanuts, I could talk to him, he could talk to me, he was a gangster in someones elses territory, he was using the money, it was not his money, to make money with. He thought he could give it back in time.

They sentenced me to jail. I had a good lawyer. His name was Fleishman, the best lawyer, but they said things in court that wasn't right. I protested, but it was federal law and they sent me to Stanford Conneticut. I met two guys there, one was William, he was black and the other was Klaus, he was ganz genau german. They took me to school, they seemed to know everything and I was open. They told me the politics upside down. They opened my eyes. Jail was worth it, it was like private university.

While I was in jail my brother took my business over. When I came out I was a wholesome juke box merchant. Seeberg wanted to take me. That was my motto: real good music. Rythm and blues, soul music. When Peanuts got out of jail we founded a music company. I sent for my mother, she paid down the house in Buffalo and came. I wasn't a fool spending money, I was investing.

Then the japanese imperialists bombed Pearl Harbour. I am repairing my machines, I'm driving my Cadillac, I felt an american, I had good white friends, black friends, it was my home country. Japanese bomb Pearl Harbour, it's my country. So I finished my work and I drove to the city hall. There was a marine recruiting station. I went into the elevator, I went up, it's all in red white and blue. I told him, I was a boy scout. But he looked at me, he just says: we don't take negros. So I turned around I leaved. Thoughts came to me, I mean, I knew about my colours.

I stayed in the music business. I met a guy, his name was Feel, he was a real hip guy, he always looked good, he was wearing jackets nearly to his knees. Feel worked together with a guy called Bear, and we split the money. I started to neglect my rows and then they made pinball machines illegal. So a big part of my business was cut off. I was out of business to this respect. I thought of going to California and I got to Phoenix Arizona. I had a new car after the war. I brought my business with me.

The farms around Phoenix they are almost as far as you can see. When you are collecting bloom, it's beautiful. The sky touches the ground, the clouds are sitting on the field. There are little huts, shacks in these fields, and they all have a juke box in it. If you want to hear good music, you go out to these cattle shacks: It doesn't matter if someone is playing or if it is the Juke boxes. Out there, people are playing real good music.

In Phoenix I walked into the wall green drug store - it's a big chaine - and they won't serve me. I sit there, they don't serve me, I sit till I decided to go. I knew Sue Berkins, she was a student, she now has a daughter, her name is Philis Berkins she is a lawyer. I through her knew other students. We organized these little group, we went to the wall green drug store and we ordered all we wanted. We sit there we keep on sitting there after a while the manager comes out. We said, it's a law, you have to serve us. And we sent them the NAACP National advancement for coloured people, which is connected with the church, so they can't ban it. So we sit there. It was the first sit down strike I heard of. I learned from that. That grew. We start going to other places.

Then I heard about a guy, he had a music box contract. He drove around in a truck and he took me to Tucson. We went to the representative and said, we want to take the Juke boxes. He expressed some doubts. I looked around in the office and there were some pictures on the wall and I see Bob Bear, I said call him. So he knew that I knew him. And he called. They gave us the job and they paid for the plane to Phoenix, so I was back in Phoenix and I had to put them in locations. We put them mainly in places for black guys.

One night the communist party had a meeting. I took a taxi to the address. I walked in. It was the civil rights front. In the session one woman got up, she was a speaker and she said: We are going to do this regardless how many FBI agents they send. She looked at me. She thought I was an FBI agent.

I started going to Labour school. I was a member of the Californian labour school squirel. We were singing the back of Earl Robinson. Sometimes we hear about problems. We organize to have a sit down strike. My friend David Whitney was with me. I was always following my idea of the delivery systems, but I wanted to make it more clearly. He was a technician, moon rockets to name it. He influenced my thinking. He said: No moving parts. Just what you have to have. So I developed the containers 3 meter to 5 meter. I met another friend from L.A. I met him in the library of C.L.S. We are friends ever since, we made every political activity, strikes, leaflets. You can have a lot of problems, if you are not born in America. We made a group of foreign born americans. Linda Smith made that. We had parties, we supported Cuba. Whenever America would do something on a helpless country. They invaded Cuba by their proxy. We had demonstrations in the federal building, Flugblätter, we were talking to people.

I was living in L.A. then. I had a dress shop "The most? and ready to wear". It has womens clothes and men's shirts. It was on 50th 75 Broadway. Anyway it was on Broadway. I'm in the shop investing 100 Dollars. I was thinking of making a record shop. This black woman came to me, she had the property. She needed someone to make this dress boxes. I made the Tischlerwork and she wanted me to make some Tischler work in the showroom. I took the money in shirts. Other salesman came by. So I got a second dress shop across the street from the 54 Ballroom. I started with one green dress in the window. I stayed open late at night. The shop next door stayed up open like me, so we were hipping each other what means we were hipping ourselves. People had to go by going to the stadium. It had big windows, beautiful windows.

I wanted to do my project. I had the money and I had to close the shop because the Philis station, which is Standard oil wanted to put a station there. I can't compete with that. So I took a plane, it was iceland air, which was the cheapest and I came to Frankfurt, but it was hard even to get a hotel. So I asked people, where do I have peace to do my project and they said Prag and I went there. I met a guy, he was an architect. He wanted Dollars and I needed Kronen. I paid him in Dollars and lived in his parents house. He made all the drawings for me for the models for houses and for the rail connections where the containers are put on. They either go on tracks on the ground or in the air. They always go with 80 m.p.h. Then there are the platforms of the houses and the container enters the elevator and is transported to the apartments. He helped me build the models. I go to school, I sit in classes. I was speaking only english. So they asked me if I wanted to give an English class. I was an english teacher in Czechoslovakia. It was interesting being in Prag. I met a lot of architects and town planners and my project improved. I learned a lot.

Once I went to east Berlin and as I had to cash some American Express cheques I went over to West Berlin. There was a guy at the american express, he was passing Flugblätter and he asked me: What are you doing against the Vietnam war. So I joined the group of Americans against the Vietnam War in Berlin. We had an action. It was in a gallery, they let us have the gallery to raise money. We raised 5 000 \$ for this action and it was raised with the clear knowledge of giving it to the Vietkong. Then we made a trip to Prag, where we had a big press conference and we gave the money to the Vietkong. There were interviews in american and soviet union papers, there were pictures in the papers.

We were passing Flugblatts in front of A.house and in front of the american camps. There were demonstrations. The police put the water and they put on full blast.

The first job I had was at the Beautiful Balloon, which was one of the first dicotheks in Berlin. This was

when Hair came to Berlin and I made the show with the shadows but the place lost money and the place closed. They owed me money but they gave me a very good record. This very beautiful girl and me we lived near Kleist Park but then we moved to a student house. I was building a lot of models, the houses for my project. Her father was an engineer, he was working with Siemens and he told me some technical aspects of my platform waggons. I also went to Siemens but I was late more than I should have been. I already have the baby, another Davis Aylers, little David, and I'm very proud of him. He is 21 years old now. He always played with the models. Now I'm building them out of found materials. I tried to invent some plastic out of plastic bags and sand, which burnt my hands, which makes it more difficult now. This is a project for the people. It should change their lives, make it easier, help them.